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# ROUGH JUSTICE





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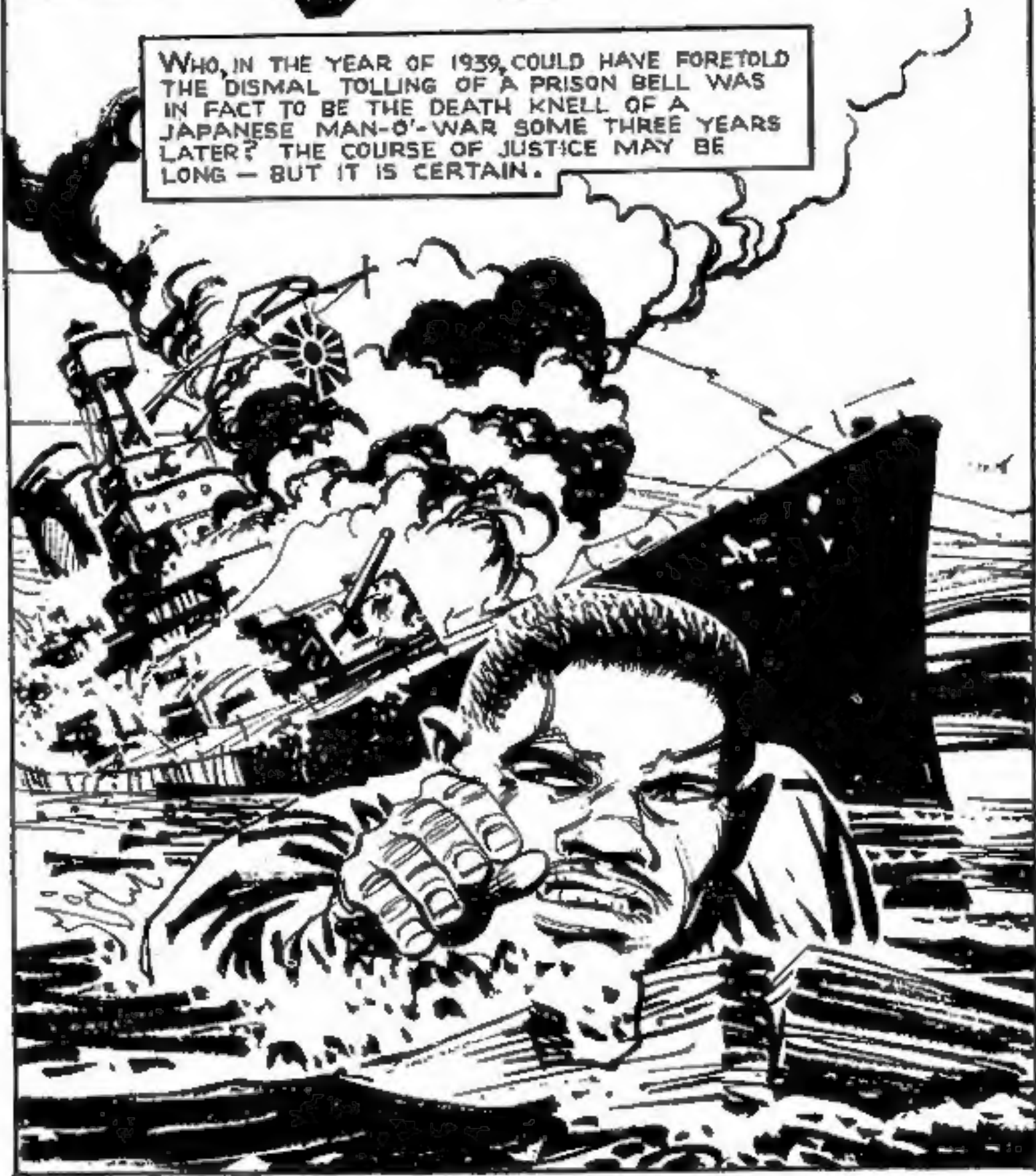
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# Rough Justice

WHO, IN THE YEAR OF 1939, COULD HAVE FORETOLD THE DISMAL TOLLING OF A PRISON BELL WAS IN FACT TO BE THE DEATH KNEEL OF A JAPANESE MAN-O'-WAR SOME THREE YEARS LATER? THE COURSE OF JUSTICE MAY BE LONG — BUT IT IS CERTAIN.



## Chapter 1. The Criminals

IN THE CHILL OF A JANUARY NIGHT IN 1939, THE SOULLESS CLAMOUR OF THE PRISON BELL ECHOED EERILY THROUGH THE MISTS THAT SWIRLED ACROSS A BLEAK ENGLISH MOOR. IN REMOTE COTTAGES, DOORS WERE DOUBLE-BARRED AND PEOPLE HUDDLED CLOSER TO THEIR FIRES. FOR THAT PLAINTIVE CALL WAS THE GRIM WARNING OF A PRISON BREAK.



COME IN AND BOLT THE DOOR, MAN, 'TIS NO PLACE TO BE ABROAD TONIGHT. HARK TO THOSE DOGS!

POOR DEVILS, WHOEVER THEY ARE. THE MOOR CAN BE HARD ON THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW HER WAYS.

THE MOURNFUL BAYING OF HOUNDS CARRIED ACROSS THE DESOLATE COUNTRYSIDE. IT BROUGHT AN ADDED CHILL OF FEAR TO THE TWO MEN CROUCHED IN A ROUGH CULVERT SOME THREE MILES FROM THE PRISON.

LISTEN, SLADE. THEY'RE CLOSING IN! WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TRIED IT. BEST GIVE UP QUIETLY, WE'LL NEVER SHAKE OFF THOSE DOGS.

THIS BREAK'S PLANNED TOO WELL TO FAIL, RIDER. THE MOTOR BIKE'S PLANTED LESS THAN HALF-A-MILE FROM HERE. QUIT YAPPING, AN' COME ON!



SKILFULLY, THE ARM OF THE LAW CAST ITS NET. ROAD BLOCKS WERE SET UP TO SEAL OFF THE AREA OF THE MAN HUNT.

WHO'S GONE OVER THE WALL THIS TIME, JIM?

A BIG FELLOW NAME O' BOB RIDER - AND DANNY SLADE!



SLADE - A WRONG 'UN! DOPE PEDDLING - THEN HE TOOK THE RAP ON A MURDER CHARGE.

THAT'S HIM - AS MEAN AS A RATTLESNAKE! CAN'T FIGURE HOW YOUNG RIDER GOT MIXED UP WITH HIM. HE'S JUST A KID WHO GOT A TOUGH BREAK.



AS SLADE HAD ANTICIPATED THE POWERFUL MOTOR BIKE WAS WAITING FOR THEM. THE MEN WHO HAD HELPED HIM WERE NO AMATEURS IN THE PROFESSION OF CRIME.

COME ON, CURSE YOU, GIVE ME A HAND!

DANNY, LOOK OUT! BEHIND YOU!

ALL RIGHT, YOU TWO, THE GAME'S UP!





BUT SLADE HAD COME TOO FAR TO BE STOPPED NOW. WITH A SAVAGE OATH, HE LAUNCHED HIMSELF AT THE SERGEANT WHO CRASHED HEAVILY INTO THE HOLLOW.

YOU'VE STUCK YOUR NOSE IN ONCE TOO OFTEN, COPPER! THIS IS WHERE YOU...

LEAVE HIM BE, DANNY!  
I'LL HAVE NO BLOODSHED.

SLADE GLARED AT BOB RIDER, BUT THE YOUNGSTER WAS TOO TOUGH A HANDFUL FOR HIM TO TACKLE.

YOU FOOL! ONE BLEAT AND HE'LL BRING THE WHOLE FORCE DOWN ON US...

YOU'D BETTER GET GOING THEN, DANNY. JUST DON'T TOUCH THAT COPPER.

WITH A SNARL, SLADE GRABBED THE BIKE AND DRAGGED IT OFF INTO THE NIGHT.

EVEN AS HE DID SO, A LONG LEAN SHADOW LAUNCHED ITSELF FROM THE DARKNESS. BOB RIDER FLUNG UP HIS ARM DEFENSIVELY...



THEN THE NIGHT AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE SHRILL OF WHISTLES AND THE SHOUTING OF POLICE AND WARDERS AS THEY CLOSED IN ON THE CONVICT WHO WAS FIGHTING DESPERATELY WITH THE POLICE DOG.



IN THE CONFUSION, NO-ONE HEARD THE SOUND OF A MOTORCYCLE ENGINE WHICH FADED SWIFTLY AWAY INTO THE NIGHT.

C.I.D. MEN KEPT A CLOSE WATCH ON PORTS AND AIRWAYS, BUT DANNY SLADE WAS NEVER SEEN IN ENGLAND AGAIN. THE UNDERWORLD TO WHICH HE BELONGED TOOK CARE OF ITS OWN.

THE THINK WILL TAKE YOU TO THE SHIP, THE CAPTAIN ISN'T GIVEN TO ASKING QUESTIONS. HE SAILS ON THE NIGHT TIDE — AND ONCE YOU REACH SHANGHAI, YOU'LL GET FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.



FOR BOB RIDER, IT WAS AN IGNOMINIOUS RETURN TO PRISON. THE MASSIVE GATES CLOSED BEHIND HIS PAIN-RACKED BODY AS HE WAS CARRIED IN ON A STRETCHER...



GET HIM TO THE INFIRMARY QUICKLY. THAT DOG WORKED HIM OVER PRETTY BADLY.

I'VE CALLED THE DOCTOR, SIR. HE'S COMING AT ONCE.



EARNING A FULL REMITTANCE OF SENTENCE FOR SAVING THE POLICE SERGEANT'S LIFE, BOB WAS RELEASED IN JUNE OF THAT YEAR. DETERMINED TO MAKE A FRESH START, HE RETURNED TO THE ONLY TRADE HE KNEW—THE SEA.

YOU HAD A FIRST-CLASS RECORD. YOU WERE EVEN SECOND OFFICER ON ONE OF OUR SHIPS. BUT I'M SORRY, RIDER, I'D LIKE TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE BUT NO MAN WITH A PRISON RECORD CAN BE RE-EMPLOYED.



FOR WEEKS HE COMBED THE WATER-FRONT SEEKING A JOB. AT LAST, A CHANCE CAME AS BOSUN ON A SALT-CAKED OLD OIL TANKER, THE S.S. MARIE ROSE, BOUND FOR THE PACIFIC.

WELCOME ABOARD, RIDER. YOU'LL FIND THINGS A BIT ROUGH AND READY. BUT IF A MAN CAN DO HIS JOB ON THIS SHIP WE'RE NOT TOO FUSSY WHERE HE'S COME FROM OR WHAT HE'S DONE.



THANKS, SKIPPER.

FOR TWO YEARS, BOB RIDER SAILED ON THE MARIE ROSE IN THE TURBULENT WATERS OF THE CHINA SEAS. HE STUCK TO HIS JOB AND WORKED WELL.

THE BAROMETER'S DROPPING FAST, BOSUN! GET THOSE LAZY SWABS MOVING.

AYE AYE, SIR! ALL HANDS ON DECK! LOOK LIVELY, THERE!



CAPTAIN O'ROURKE, MASTER OF THE S.S. MARIE ROSE, MOVED BACK INTO THE SHELTER OF THE WHEEL-HOUSE. HE SPOKE TO HIS FIRST OFFICER, WHO WAS SHARING THE WATCH...

"YOUNG RIDER'S SHAPED UP WELL TO THE JOB, NUMBER ONE! IT'S NOT BEEN EASY FOR HIM. WHEN WE REACH HONG KONG I'M SENDING HIM UP TO COMPANY OFFICE, WITH A RECOMMENDATION FOR PROMOTION TO SECOND OFFICER."

AYE, SKIPPER, HE'S A GOOD LAD. IF HE WENT OFF THE RAILS ONCE, HE'S PAID FOR IT NOW. TIME HE HAD A DECENT BREAK.



TWO DAYS LATER, THEY WERE TIED UP ALONGSIDE IN HONG KONG HARBOUR. THE RED DUSTER FLAPPED LISTLESSLY ASTERN, BUT ASHORE THERE WAS AN ATMOSPHERE OF ELECTRIC TENSION THAT READILY COMMUNICATED ITSELF TO THE SHIP.



HEY, CHINA JOE! WHAT'S ALL THE FLAP?

HELLO, MISTER BOB. PLENTY BAD FELLOW JAPS COME CHOP CHOP. HONG KONG NO GOOD PLACE ANY MORE. YOU GO QUICK!



GET YOURSELF CLEANED UP, BOB. I WANT THESE PAPERS TAKEN TO THE SHIPPING OFFICE. LOOK SLIPPY, THEY'RE EXPECTING YOU AND I COULD BE IMPORTANT.

RIGHT, SKIPPER.

HALF AN HOUR LATER, HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO AN APPOINTMENT THAT WAS NEVER TO BE KEPT.

WONDER IF CHINA JOE WAS RIGHT? THE ARMY DOES LOOK PRETTY STEAMED UP!



FAR AWAY, A PALL OF SMOKE HUNG OVER ANOTHER GREAT NAVAL BASE. THE WAR LORDS OF THE RISING SUN HAD STRUCK WITH DEVASTATING EFFECT AT PEARL HARBOUR...



THAT SAME DAY, AS THE FULL FURY OF THE JAPANESE WAR MACHINE WAS LAUNCHED ACROSS THE ORIENT, THE SHADOW OF DEATH FELL OVER HONG KONG...

GLORIOUS IMPERIAL AIR FORCE  
ALREADY SMASH WHITE DOGS  
AT PEARL HARBOUR! NOW  
WE ATTACK HONG KONG.





THE ATTACK CAME OUT OF THE CLEAR AZURE SKY WITHOUT WARNING.

ACTION STATIONS!  
AIR ATTACK!  
CLOSE UP, ALL  
GUN CREWS!

GET THAT OLD TANKER AWAY FROM  
THE DOCKSIDE. IF SHE STOPS  
ONE THERE, SHE'LL TAKE  
HALF THE HARBOUR  
WITH HER.



AS THE DESTROYER NOSED ALONGSIDE THE MARIE ROSE, THE AIR WAS ALREADY FILLED WITH THE FLAT THROB OF AERO ENGINES AND FROM THE MAINLAND CAME THE CLEAR CUT BARK OF ACK ACK FIRE,

CAST OFF AND HEAD FOR  
THE OPEN SEA! WE'LL  
GIVE YOU AS MUCH COVER  
AS WE CAN.

ONE O' MY LADS  
IS STILL ASHORE.  
WE'LL PUSH OFF  
AS SOON AS...



THE ROYAL NAVY WAS IN NO MOOD TO ARGUE. A HARSH COMMAND RANG CLEARLY ACROSS THE WATER.

GET YOUR SHIP TO BLAZES OUT OF HERE, CAPTAIN - IMMEDIATELY! YOU COULD BLOW HALF THE DOCKS TO KINGDOM COME.

HAPPEN THEY'RE RIGHT FOR ONCE, NUMBER ONE. STAND BY TO GO ABOUT! BOB'LL HAVE TO TAKE HIS CHANCE.

LET GO FORWARD!

MEANWHILE, BOB WAS BATTLING HIS WAY THROUGH THE PANIC-STRIKEN FLOOD OF HUMANITY THAT CHOKED THE NARROW STREETS OF HONG KONG HARBOUR...

GET OUT OF MY WAY, CURSE YOU! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO MY SHIP.





AS HE REACHED THE QUAYSIDE THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE JAP ATTACK SWEPT IN. STICK AFTER STICK OF BOMBS ERUPTED IN A SATANIC NIGHTMARE OF FLYING SHRAPNEL AND DEBRIS.

WHERE THE DEVIL'S MY SHIP? SEEN THE MARIE ROSE? SHE WAS TIED UP HERE AWHILE BACK.

IF YOU MEAN THAT OLD TANKER, SHE SAILED A FEW MINUTES SINCE. DARN GOOD JOB TOO!



AS THE DRIFTING SMOKE LIFTED, RIDER STARED IN HORRIFIED DISBELIEF AT THE STERN OF HIS SHIP CHURNING STOLIDLY TOWARD THE HARBOUR MOUTH.

SHE'S GONE! THEY COULDN'T... THEY WOULDN'T GO WITHOUT ME!

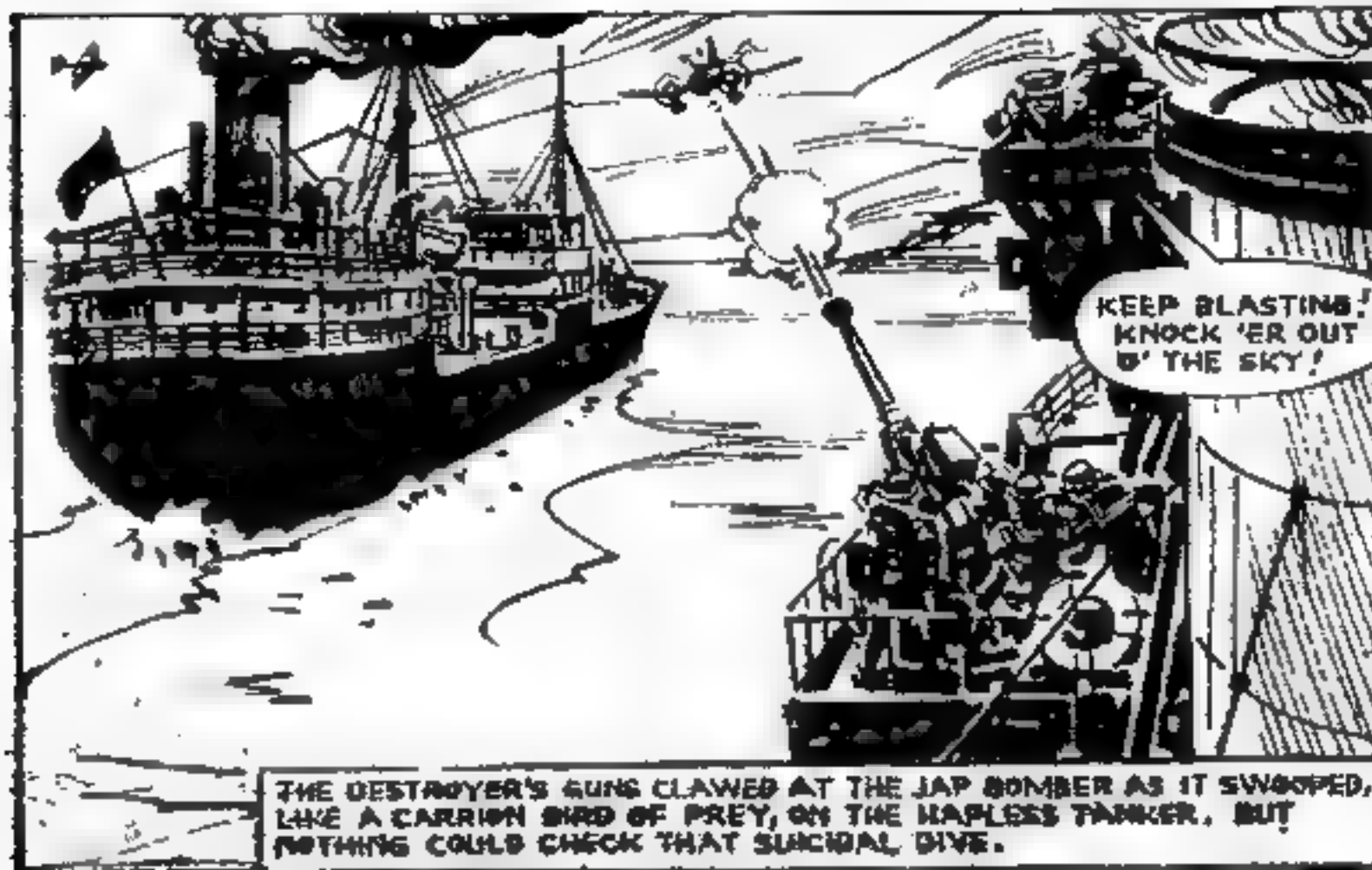
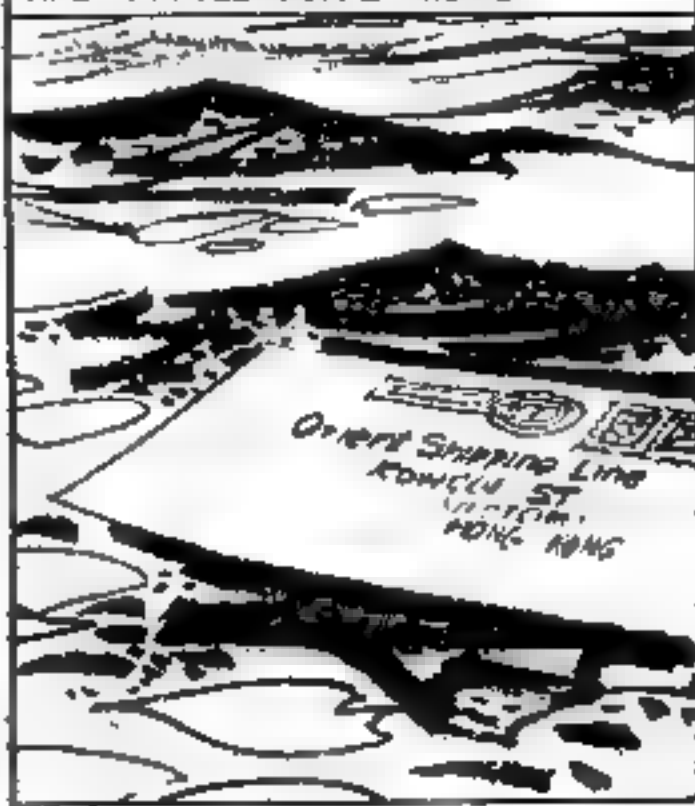


LOOKS LIKE THEY HAVE, CHUM — HIT THE DECK! HERE COMES ANOTHER BRUTE!

THE SERGEANT'S WARNING WENT UNHEEDED FOR A WAVE OF UNCONTROLLABLE ANGER SWEEP OVER BOB AND HE HURLED THE ENVELOPE INTO THE HARBOUR.



THE DOCUMENTS SANK INTO THE MURKY WATERS OF THE HARBOUR. IRONICALLY, BOB NEVER REALISED THAT WITH THEM WENT THE CHANCE OF REDEMPTION THAT HE HAD WAITED FOR SO LONG.



THE DESTROYER'S GUNS CLAWED AT THE JAP BOMBER AS IT SWOOPED, LIKE A CARRION BIRD OF PREY, ON THE HAPLESS TANKER. BUT NOTHING COULD CHECK THAT SUICIDAL DIVE.

THERE WAS A BLINDING FLASH. THE *MARIE ROSE* GAVE ONE CONVULSIVE HEAVE, THEN SETTLED SWIFTLY IN THE WATER, HER DECKS A BLAZING TORCH OF LIQUID FIRE.



GOOD GRIEF,  
DEAR DEVILS!

WITH SICK HORROR, BOB WATCHED THE DEATH THROES OF HIS OLD SHIP AND SLOWLY THE ANGER DIED WITHIN HIM, LEAVING ONLY A DULL ACHING VOID.

THEY GOT WHAT  
WAS COMING TO  
'EM. IT'S EVERY  
MAN FOR  
HIMSELF - AND  
THE DEVIL  
TAKE THE  
HINDMOST!



THE SERGEANT LOOKED AT BOB THOUGHTFULLY FOR SOME MOMENTS, THEN SHRUGGED. IT WAS NO TIME TO PREACH A SERMON.

FM ALL RIGHT NOW. I'VE  
SHED ALL THE TEARS FM  
GOING TO. THEY DIDNT  
GIVE A TINKER'S  
CUSS FOR ME.

YOU'VE GOT  
A FUNNY  
WAY O'  
LOOKING AT  
THINGS - BUT  
COME ON, WE  
CAN'T ST  
HERE ALL  
DAY.





IN THE UNCANNY SILENCE THAT FOLLOWED THE ATTACK THEY MOVED OVER TO THE MACHINE GUN POST. THE SERGEANT'S FACE HARDENED AS HIS GAZE FELL ON THE CARNAGE AROUND THE SITE.

THERE'S NOUGHT WE CAN DO FOR THIS LOT. WE'LL PUSH OFF TO H.Q. AND SEE WHAT'S DOING. BY THE WAY, MY NAME'S TAGGART—ROCKY TAGGART.

OKAY, ROCKY, I'LL STRING ALONG WITH YOU. I'M BOB RIDER. I WAS BOSUN OF THAT TANKER.



WHEN THEY REACHED BATTALION HEADQUARTERS SERGEANT TAGGART REPORTED TO HIS COMPANY COMMANDER, CAPTAIN ELTON.

I BROUGHT THIS SAILOR ALONG. HE LOST HIS SHIP. THOUGHT HE MIGHT COME IN HANDY.

WE TOOK A PASTING HERE OURSELVES. I'VE REFORMED THE COMPANY AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. YOU'LL COMMAND NUMBER ONE PLATOON. YOU CAN USE THE SAILOR IF YOU WANT. WE'RE ORDERED OVER TO KOWLOON.



CARING LITTLE WHERE THE TIDE OF FORTUNE BORE HIM, BOB JOINED THE INFANTRY COMPANY ON THE FERRY OVER TO THE MAINLAND.

CAN YOU HANDLE A LEE ENFIELD, BOB?

I'VE GOT THE GENERAL IDEA. WE HAD A COUPLE ON THE SHIP.

GOOD! IF MY GUESS IS RIGHT, YOU'LL BE GETTING PLENTY OF PRACTICE



THE COMPANY LANDED AT KOWLOON AND BY TWILIGHT, THEY WERE DIGGING IN ALONG A ROUGH DEFENCE LINE NEAR THE CHINESE FRONTIER.


NOT A SMELL OF 'EM YET. THINK THEY'LL ATTACK, SIR?

I'D LAY EVEN MONEY FOR TONIGHT. THEY'RE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. WE'VE DONE ALL WE CAN, BUT IT'S AN UGLY SITUATION, SERGEANT.



DARKNESS CLOSED IN ABRUPTLY. BUT THERE WAS LITTLE SLEEP FOR THE MEN CROUCHING TENSELY BEHIND LOADED GUNS. SLOWLY, THE LONG NIGHT HOURS PASSED, AND RIDER HAD TIME TO THINK.

I MUST HAVE GONE LOCO GETTING HOOKED UP WITH YOU LOT. WHY THE BLAZES SHOULD I FIGHT? I'M NO SOLDIER.

YOU'RE BRITISH AND THERE'S A WAR  MAYBE YOU'D FORGOTTEN THAT SHOULD BE A GOOD ENOUGH REASON.

DON'T SHOOT ME THAT LINE ABOUT FIGHTING FOR KING AND COUNTRY. I DON'T OWE ANYONE...

BOBBY TRAP GONE OFF! THIS IS IT — STAND TO YOUR GUNS!



## Chapter 2. No Surrender

THEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE AS MACHINE GUNS OPENED UP ALONG THE LINE. A STAR SHELL BURST IN THE AIR ITS INCANDESCENT LIGHT TURNING NIGHT INTO DAY.



CUNNING LITTLE SWINES! THEY'RE RIGHT IN ON US! TRAVERSE LEFT, GUNNER...

SUDDENLY THE INCESSANT HAMMER OF THE VICKERS GUN BESIDE THEM CUT DEAD. SERGEANT TAGGART HURLED HIMSELF TOWARDS IT...

AAAGH!

KEEP FIRING, BOB! I'LL TAKE OVER THE VICKERS!



ALTHOUGH THE MACHINE GUNS PUNCHED DEATH AT THE JAPS TWELVE TIMES A SECOND, MANY KEPT COMING AND AT CLOSE QUARTERS, BOB RIDER FOUND A GOOD REASON FOR FIGHTING - HIS OWN SURVIVAL!

UGH!

THAT'S AS FAR AS YOU  
COME, YOU LITTLE APES!



GRIMLY, THE TWO MEN FOUGHT IT OUT SIDE BY SIDE, AS ANOTHER WAVE OF JAPS FLUNG THEMSELVES ON TO THE GUNS OF THE BRITISH.

FOR AN  
AMATEUR,  
YOU'RE  
NOT DOING  
SO BAD.

SAVE YOUR BREATH,  
ROCKY! I HAVEN'T  
GOT MUCH CHOICE,  
HAVE I?



GRADUALLY THE FIRING DIED AWAY EXCEPT FOR THE BRIEF STUTTER OF A MACHINE GUN. THEN THE FIGURE OF CAPTAIN ELTON LOOMED OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

CASUALTIES ARE HIGH, S R, BUT, BY THUNDER, WE GAVE 'EM SOMETHING TO CHEW OVER.

I'M AFRAID IT WAS ONLY A PROBING ATTACK TO GET OUR MEASURE. THERE ARE FANATICAL HORDES OUT THERE WE JUST CAN'T HOLD. WE'RE PULLING BACK!



WITH THE WOUNDED ON IMPROVISED STRETCHERS, THE MEN WEARILY FORMED UP BEHIND THEM. ONE SECTION REMAINED GRIMLY IN POSITION, FACING THE ENEMY.

WHY ARE SOME OF THE LADS STAYING PUT, ROCKY?



THEY'RE TO COVER OUR RETREAT IN CASE THE NIPS HAVE ANOTHER CRACK WHILE WE'RE ON THE MOVE. WITH LUCK, THEY'LL FOLLOW US ON AT FIRST LIGHT.



ORDERS OR NOT,  
YOU WOULDN'T  
CATCH ME  
STICKING IT OUT  
WHILE YOU LOT  
DO A MOONLIGHT  
FLIT.

THEY DON'T  
SEE T THAT  
WAY. THEY'RE  
JUST DOING  
THEIR JOB  
MAYBE A  
STRETCH IN THE  
FORCES MIGHT  
STRAIGHTEN  
YOUR IDEAS  
OUT A BIT.



THE COLUMN HAD MARCHED FOUR  
MILES WHEN THE DISTANT RATTLE  
OF MACHINE GUNS CAME ACROSS  
THE NIGHT AIR.

SOUNDS LIKE YOUR  
MATES ARE CARRYING  
THE CAN  
FOR US,  
ROCKY.

WRAP IT UP,  
BOB! IT WAS  
JUST THE LUCK  
O' THE  
DRAW. OUR  
TURN WILL  
COME.



NOW THE IMMEDIATE FIGHTING WAS OVER, THE OLD GRUDGE AGAINST  
LIFE RETURNED TO BOB RIDER, TO GNAW ONCE AGAIN LIKE A CANKER  
IN HIS HEART.

HAVE IT YOUR WAY,  
ROCKY. JUST COUNT ME OUT  
IF YOU WANT A HERO.  
I'VE SEEN ENOUGH!



FOR THE PATHETIC HANDFUL OF BRITISH TROOPS WHO COVERED THE RETREAT, THE END CAME SWIFTLY. ON THOSE BARE, HOSTILE SLOPES, THEY FACED IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.

ON YOUR FEET, LADS. USE THE GRENADES...  
AAAGH!

BANZAI! DEATH TO THE WHITE DEVILS!



THE TRIUMPHANT JAPS FOUND THEY HAD PAID A HIGH PRICE FOR VICTORY.

ALL RESISTANCE HAS CEASED, EXCELLENCY.

FOOL, I CAN SEE THAT! WE HAVE BEEN TRICKED. HUNDREDS OF OUR SOLDIERS HAVE DIED FOR A MERE HANDFUL OF THESE WHITE SCUM!



MEANWHILE IN THE GREY LIGHT OF DAWN, CAPTAIN ELTON LED THE SURVIVORS OF THE COMPANY INTO KOWLOON, WHERE FRESH REINFORCEMENTS WERE ALREADY DUE IN.

BAKER COMPANY - THIRD BATTALION - OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT! THE NIPS MUST BE PRETTY CLOSE ON OUR TAIL.

SORRY WE CAN'T GIVE YOU A BREATH. GET YOUR WOUNDED EVACUATED, THEN JOIN YOUR BATTALION. THEY'RE COVERING THE WEST SIDE OF THE TOWN.

AN HOUR LATER THEY WERE IN THEIR ALLOTTED SECTOR, HURRIEDLY PREPARING DEFENSIVE POSITIONS.

MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOT A GOOD FIELD OF FIRE.

SERGEANT, I'VE JUST GOT BACK FROM H.Q. I WANT A WORD WITH YOU.

LACK OF SLEEP AND LONG HOURS OF TENSION SHOWED CLEARLY ON THE CAPTAIN'S FACE.

COLONEL'S ORDERS TO STAY AND FIGHT IT OUT, ROCKY. THERE WILL BE NO RETREAT!

I WAS HALF EXPECTING THAT, SIR. HELLO! WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE?





THE SERGEANT TOOK THE STRANGER'S INTO CAPTAIN ELTON'S MAKE-SHIFT OFFICE.

I THINK YOU WILL FIND MY PAPERS IN ORDER, CAPTAIN. I MUST REACH GENERAL H.Q., HONG KONG, AT ONCE.

ALL RIGHT, SERGEANT. LEAVE THIS TO ME...



WHEN THE CAPTAIN LOOKED UP FROM THE PAPERS, THERE WAS A HARD LOOK ON HIS FACE.

THESE IDENTIFICATION PAPERS ARE ALMOST PERFECT. FORTUNATELY, I SERVED IN INTELLIGENCE MYSELF. THEY'RE NOT QUITE GOOD ENOUGH! NOW, WHO ARE YOU - AND LET'S HAVE THE TRUTH THIS TIME?



AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, LESS THAN A MILE FROM KOWLOON, A JAPANESE OFFICER'S SWORD FLASHED IN THE SUNLIGHT, AND A DOZEN FIELD GUNS BELCHED FLAME.



FOR ONCE THE GLIB TONGUE OF DANNY SLADE FAILED HIM. LIKE A CORNERED RAT, HE LOOKED ROUND FOR A WAY OF ESCAPE, BUT THIS TIME THERE WAS NONE.

I'M WAITING FOR AN ANSWER, MAJOR! IT HAD BETTER BE A GOOD ONE!



THAT UNEASY SILENCE LASTED JUST LONG ENOUGH FOR A HIGH VELOCITY SHELL TO TRAVEL A THOUSAND ODD YARDS. THEN...

AAAGH!





OUTSIDE, SLADE COULD HEAR THE CRIES OF THE STRICKEN SOLDIERS DROWNED IN THE BOMBARDMENT. BUT INSIDE THE ROOM NOTHING STIRRED. WITH CALLOUS DELIBERATION, HE DREW AN AUTOMATIC PISTOL FROM HIS POCKET.

TOO BAD YOU  
HAD TO BE SO  
SMART, CAPTAIN.

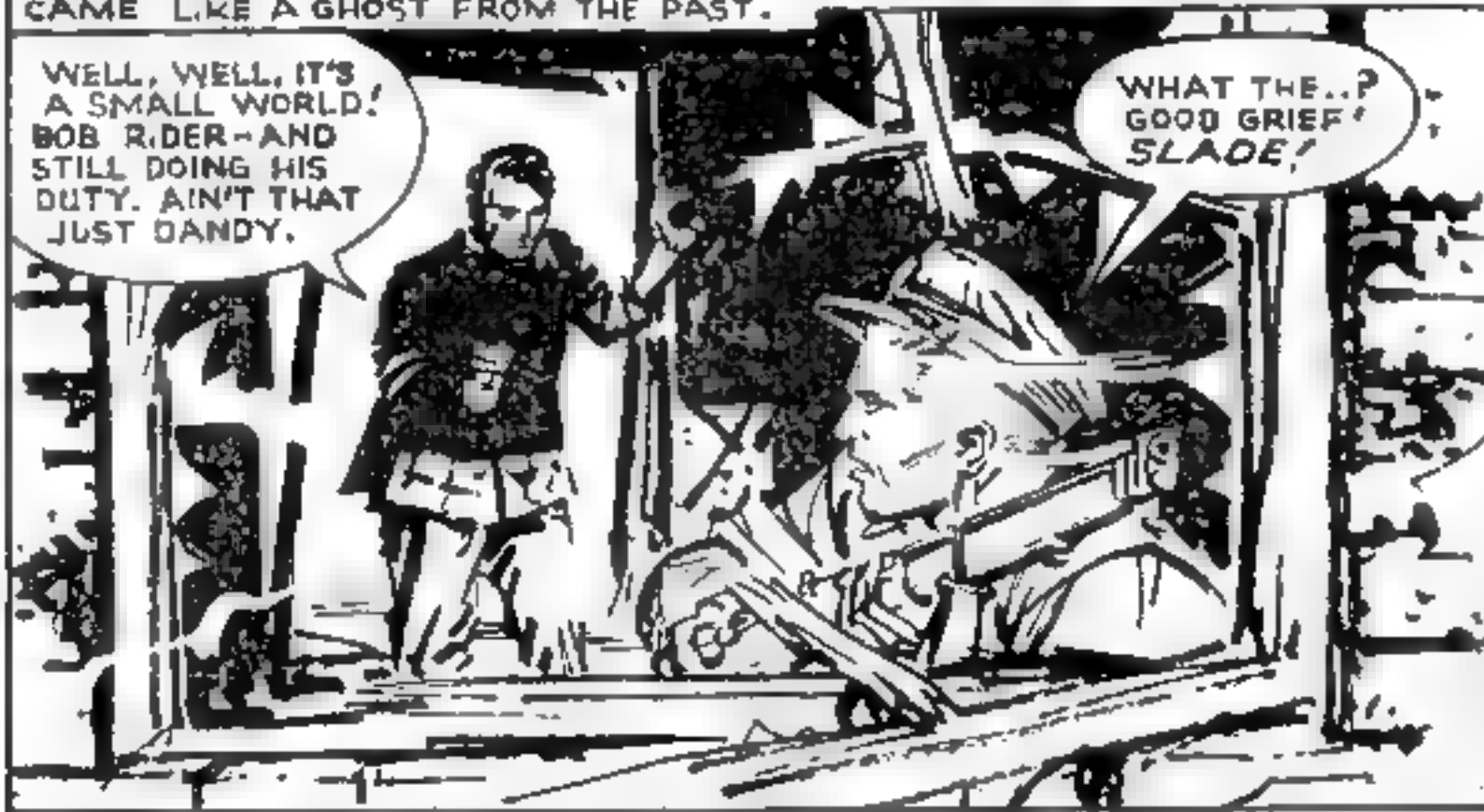


IN THE PANDEMONIUM, THE TWO  
MUFFLED SHOTS PASSED UNNOTICED.

RIDER CROUCHED IN A HOUSE, WHERE HE HAD DIVED FOR COVER. THE SHELLING HAD LIFTED, BUT THE DISTANT RATTLE OF SMALL ARMS FIRE HERALDED THE ENEMY ONSLAUGHT. THEN, FROM BEHIND HIM, A HARSH SNEERING VOICE CAME LIKE A GHOST FROM THE PAST.

WELL, WELL, IT'S  
A SMALL WORLD!  
BOB RIDER—AND  
STILL DOING HIS  
DUTY. AIN'T THAT  
JUST DANDY.

WHAT THE...?  
GOOD GRIEF!  
SLADE!



IN THAT BIZARRE MOMENT OF DEFEAT, THE TWO MEN STOOD ONCE AGAIN, FACE TO FACE, WITH A BITTER SMILE, BOB IGNORED THE UGLY THREAT OF SLADE'S GUN.

SO! YOU'VE CHANGED QUITE A BIT, RIDER. A SAILOR, EH?

YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG, SLADE. I'M NO HALF-BAKED SQUADDY, I'M A SAILOR. MY SHIP RAN FOR IT WHEN THE TROUBLE BREWED UP. RIGHT NOW, MY ONLY CONCERN IS TO GET TO BLAZES OUT OF THIS MESS.



SLADE'S TWISTED MIND WORKED LIKE QUICKSILVER. BOB RIDER COULD BE USEFUL.

IF WE HAD A BOAT, COULD YOU SAIL IT TO FOCHOW? I'VE GOT FRIENDS THERE.

DEAD EASY! BUT THIS PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH JAPS. EVERY BOAT FOR MILES HAS BEEN TAKEN OVER BY THE ARMY.



BUT BOB HAD UNDERESTIMATED THE CRIMINAL'S INGENUITY.

THESE MUGS THINK I'M A MAJOR. WE'LL USE 'EM JUST AS LONG AS WE NEED, THEN WE BEAT IT. LISTEN, THERE'S MONEY TO BE MADE IN WAR. IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF, SO WHY BE FUSSY? WHAT D'YOU SAY?

OKAY, SLADE, I'LL COME WITH YOU! BUT KEEP YOUR BLOOD MONEY. I WANT NO PART OF THAT!



MEANWHILE, SERGEANT TAGGART HAD RALLIED THE COMPANY FOR A LAST DESPERATE STAND.

TAKE YOUR TIME, MEN, MAKE EVERY ROUND COUNT! CORPORAL, GET BACK, SEE WHAT'S HAPPENED AT H.Q.

HERE COME THE LITTLE VERMIN AGAIN, SARGE!

OKAY, SARGE.



SCREAMING HIGH-PITCHED BATTLE CRIES, THE JAPANESE BROKE COVER AND CHARGED FORWARD. THEY MET THE FULL FORCE OF THE BRITISH CROSSFIRE.

NO SURRENDER, MATES - KEEP FIRING!





FOR MINUTES, THE OUTCOME OF THE FIGHT SWAYED IN THE BALANCE. THEN THE TERRIBLE FIRE OF THE WELL-SIGHTED BRITISH GUNS SWUNG THE BALANCE. THE JAPANESE WITHDREW, LEAVING THE GROUND LITTERED WITH THEIR DEAD.



COLD REASON TOLD SERGEANT TAGGART THE END WAS CLOSE. THEN A VOICE AT HIS ELBOW JERKED HIM FROM HIS GRIM THOUGHTS.

YOUR COMPANY COMMANDER IS DEAD. THE H.Q. WAS HIT BY A SHELL. ORDER YOUR MEN TO PULL BACK. WE'LL TAKE TO THE HILLS.

OUR ORDERS WERE TO STAY AND FIGHT!



DESPERATELY, THE SERGEANT STRUGGLED TO CLEAR HIS BRAIN AND THINK CLEARLY. BUT SLADE'S VOICE CARRIED COMPELLING CONVICTION.

PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, MAN! WE CAN ONLY WASTE THE LIVES OF THESE MEN FOR NOTHING. THE JAPS HAVE ALREADY BROKEN THROUGH TO THE DOCKS. I'LL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ORDER, NOW GET MOVING!



THERE SEEMED BITTER TRUTH IN THE MAJOR'S WORDS. WEARILY TAGGART GAVE THE ORDER TO RETREAT.

PULL BACK, MEN!  
FOLLOW THE MAJOR.



BUT THERE HAD BEEN SOMETHING WRONG! SOMETHING HE COULD NOT PUT HIS FINGER ON. SUDDENLY, IN THE TIRED SERGEANT'S BRAIN, IT CLICKED INTO PLACE.

COME ON, ROCKY!  
WHAT'S KEEPING  
YOU?

YOU GO ON, I'LL CATCH UP.  
HOW DID THAT MAJOR KNOW THE  
JAPS HAVE GOT THROUGH TO THE  
DOCKS? WE'VE HAD NO SIGNAL!  
THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY  
ABOUT THIS! I'LL TAKE A  
QUICK DEKKO AT H.Q.



SLADE'S CRUEL EYES MISSED NOTHING. HE SPOKE SOFTLY TO THE CHINESE WHO PADDED BESIDE HIM.

THAT CURSED SERGEANT SMELLS A RAT. SEE THAT HE DOESN'T LEAVE THE TOWN ALIVE, LING

IT SHALL BE AS YOU COMMAND, MASTER.



AFTER THE BRILLIANT SUNLIGHT OF THE STREET, THE INTERIOR OF THE WRECKED H.Q. WAS DARK. BUT TAGGART SAW ENOUGH...

MURDERED! NO SHELL SPLINTER LEAVES A NEAT CLEAN HOLE. I'LL BET A MONTH'S BACK PAY IT WAS...



THE SERGEANT MOVED A FRACTION FASTER THAN THE DEADLY BLADE OF STEEL THAT FLASHED ACROSS THE ROOM.

UUGH!



BREATHING HARD, ROCKY LURCHED TO HIS FEET. THEN HE FROZE AS THE POUNDING OF FEET AND THE SHRIEL CR'ES OF JAPANESE SOLDIERS ECHOED CLEARLY DOWN THE STREET.

THAT'S TORN IT!  
JAPS! IT'S TOO LATE  
TO RUN FOR IT...



THE SOUND OF THE SHOT HAD ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE ENEMY.

SEARCH THE BUILDINGS!  
ONE OF THE DOGS STILL  
LIVES.





FOR ROCKY TAGGART, DEATH WAS VERY CLOSE. HIS SKIN CRAWLED AS HE HEARD THE SOFT TREAD OF THE ENEMY SOLDIERS WHEN THEY ENTERED THE ROOM...

COME, TOJO. DON'T WASTE TIME. THE WHITE DEVILS ARE DEAD.



DUSK WAS FALLING AS SLADE LED THE HANDFUL OF SURVIVORS TO THE COMPARATIVE SAFETY OF CAVES IN THE HILLS TO THE SOUTH-WEST OF THE TOWN. THANKFULLY, THE MEN SANK TO REST.

WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO ROCKY? I NEVER SAW HIM AFTER WE LIT OUT.

PROBABLY DIED FIGHTING FOR HIS COUNTRY, THE FOOL. WE'RE GOING TO LIVE! COME ON...



STEEPED IN EXHAUSTION, THE SOLDIERS DID NOT NOTICE THE DEPARTURE OF THE TWO MEN. SLADE SEEMED TO BE ON FAMILIAR TERRITORY AND LED THE WAY UNHESITATINGLY TOWARDS THE COAST.

JUST OVER THE RISE AND WE'LL SEE THE BAY. THERE'S A MOTOR LAUNCH HIDDEN NEAR THERE. FROM THEN ON, IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET US TO FOCHOW.

YOU'VE GOT IT ALL SEWN UP, HAVEN'T YOU? HOW COME YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS BOAT?



SLADE SMILED MIRTHLESSLY.

I HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE DRUG RACKET ALL THESE YEARS FOR MY HEALTH, RIDER, BESIDES, THE DEVIL LOOKS AFTER HIS OWN.

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!



BELOW THEM THE WOODED HILLSIDE DROPPED SHARPLY AWAY TO THE STILL WATERS OF THE BAY. BUT, IN THE CLEAR MOONLIGHT, THEY COULD SEE THE SINISTER OUTLINE OF A JAPANESE WARSHIP AT ANCHOR SOME QUARTER OF A MILE OFF SHORE.



OF ALL THE CURSED LUCK! LET'S GET DOWN TO THE VILLAGE. THERE MUST BE A WAY OUT SOMEHOW.

## Rough Justice

THE INHABITANTS HAD LONG SINCE FLED FROM THE FISHING VILLAGE OF HOPLIN AND ONLY THE INSANE CACKLE OF A SCAVENGING HYENA BROKE THE SILENCE.

WHAT THE...? DARN THE BRUTE!  
I'D SWEAR THOSE THINGS CAN  
SMELL BLOOD A MILE OFF.

NEVER MIND THE  
JACKASS! SEE THAT  
OLD JUNK. IT'LL BE  
PRETTY USEFUL TO  
US, MY FRIEND.

A QUARTER OF A MILE ON PAST THE VILLAGE SLADE HALTED ABRUPTLY AND STARTED SEARCHING AMONG A CLUMP OF COARSE SCRUB. THEN, WITH A GRUNT OF SATISFACTION, HE HEAVED ASIDE A MASSIVE BOULDER TO DISCLOSE A FLIGHT OF WELL-WORN STONE STEPS LEADING DOWN INTO A WATERY DARKNESS.

PHWEW! THAT STONE WAS HEAVY!  
NICE LITTLE BOLT-HOLE THOUGH!  
WAIT 'TIL YOU SEE WHAT  
WE'VE GOT DOWN HERE.



A STRONG SMELL OF DIESEL OIL GREETED THE MEN AS THEY DESCENDED. BOB GAVE A LOW WHISTLE AS THE BEAM OF SLADE'S TORCH REVEALED THE CLEAN LINES OF A POWERFUL SEA-GOING LAUNCH.

WHAT D'YOU THINK O' THAT, EH? THE MOB I WORK FOR DO THINGS IN A B.G. WAY. THINK YOU CAN HANDLE HER?

I CAN MANAGE THAT LITTLE BEAUTY WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND MY BACK. BUT WE'VE STILL GOT TO GET PAST THE JAP GUNBOAT!

BUT THE EVIL MIND OF DANNY SLADE HAD ALREADY EVOLVED A PLAN. COLD-BLOODED, SIMPLE, BUT IT WOULD BE FIENDISHLY EFFECTIVE.

GET THOSE SOLDIERS DOWN TO THE OLD JUNK. SPIN 'EM SOME YARN THEY'RE TO EVACUATE TO HONG KONG. ONCE THEY'RE IN MID-STREAM, WE LOB OVER A VEEY LIGHT TO TIP OFF THE JAPS. THEY'LL ALL BE TOO BUSY TO NOTICE US TAKE A POWDER. GET GOING, RIDER - IT'S THEM OR US!



## Chapter 3. *Death By Moonlight*

SICK AT HEART, RIDER RETRACED HIS STEPS TOWARDS THE CAVE. SLADE'S LAST WORDS BURNED IN HIS BRAIN — *IT'S THEM OR US — IT'S THEM OR US!* BUT THEN CAME THE TORMENTING MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAD MET DEATH WITHOUT FLINCHING...

NO-ONE GAVE  
ME A BREAK!  
BUT I CAN'T —  
I CAN'T LEAD  
THEM TO  
THEIR  
DEATHS!



MEANWHILE, FOR WHAT SEEMED AN AGONISING ETERNITY, ROCKY TAGGART DARED NOT MOVE. AT LAST, WITH THE COMING OF DARKNESS, HE STIRRED...

THE NIPS MUST HAVE  
PUSHED ON! IF I GET OUT  
O' THIS I'LL FIND MAJOR  
SLADE, IF IT'S  
THE LAST  
THING I DO!



LUCK WAS WITH HIM. SPASMODIC BURSTS OF FIRE STILL CAME FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TOWN, BUT NOTHING IMPEDED HIS PROGRESS AND HE SOON PICKED UP THE TRAIL THAT LED TOWARDS THE HILLS.

MY HUNCH WAS  
RIGHT! THE  
LADS ARE UP THERE  
SOMEWHERE.  
LET'S HOPE  
I'M NOT  
TOO LATE.



SO IT WAS THAT SERGEANT TAGGART CAUGHT UP WITH HIS ERRANT PLATOON.

SARGE! BY ALL THAT'S WONDERFUL! IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU! WE'D WRITTEN YOU OFF FOR SURE!

WHERE'S MAJOR SLADE AND THE SAILOR?

THEY WENT OUT SOME TIME BACK. THINK THEY WERE GOING TO DO A RECCE. WE HAVEN'T SEEN 'EM SINCE. MAYBE THE NIPS GOT 'EM.



AT THAT MOMENT, A FAMILIAR VOICE SOUNDED BEHIND THE SERGEANT AND HE SWUNG ROUND...

NO, THE JAPS DIDN'T GET US...

BOB! WHERE'S SLADE?



BOB RIDER SANK LISTLESSLY ON TO A ROCK, SHOULDERS SLUMPED DEJECTEDLY.

I'M ASKING FOR THE LAST TIME, SAILOR! WHERE'S SLADE?

WHY SHOULD I TELL YOU? IF YOU DID BUT KNOW IT, I'VE GIVEN YOU A BIG ENOUGH BREAK ALREADY. NO-ONE EVER GAVE ME ONE!



THE SERGEANT HAULED BOB SAVABLY TO HIS FEET.

LISTEN HERE! YOUR SHIP NEVER RAN OUT ON YOU. THEY SAILED UNDER ORDERS. THEY DIED, JUST SO WE WOULDN'T ALL GET BLOWN TO KINGDOM COME! AS FOR SLADE, HE MURDERED CAPTAIN ELTON - AND HE TRIED TO MURDER ME!



IT TOOK LONG MOMENTS FOR THE FULL MEANING OF THE SERGEANT'S WORDS TO SINK HOME. THEN...

S-SAILED UNDER ORDERS! I-I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! ALL RIGHT, ROCKY, I'LL TELL YOU WHERE SLADE IS...



WITHIN TEN MINUTES, SERGEANT TAGGART HAD GOADED THE EXHAUSTED SOLDIERS BACK ON TO THEIR FEET...

OKAY, BOB, LEAD ON! WE'LL HAVE OUR LITTLE MOONLIGHT CRUISE, BUT NOT QUITE THE WAY FRIEND SLADE PLANNED IT. READY, MEN...



THE STARS WERE ALREADY GROWING FAINT IN THE SKY AS THE MEN STUMBLING ABOARD THE OLD HULK. THE SERGEANT'S LAST, HURRIED ORDERS CAME IN A WHISPER.

THE SAILOR AND I ARE GOING TO VISIT AN OLD FRIEND. LIE LOW 'TIL WE GET BACK, BUT BE READY TO PUSH OFF. GOOD LUCK, JOCK!

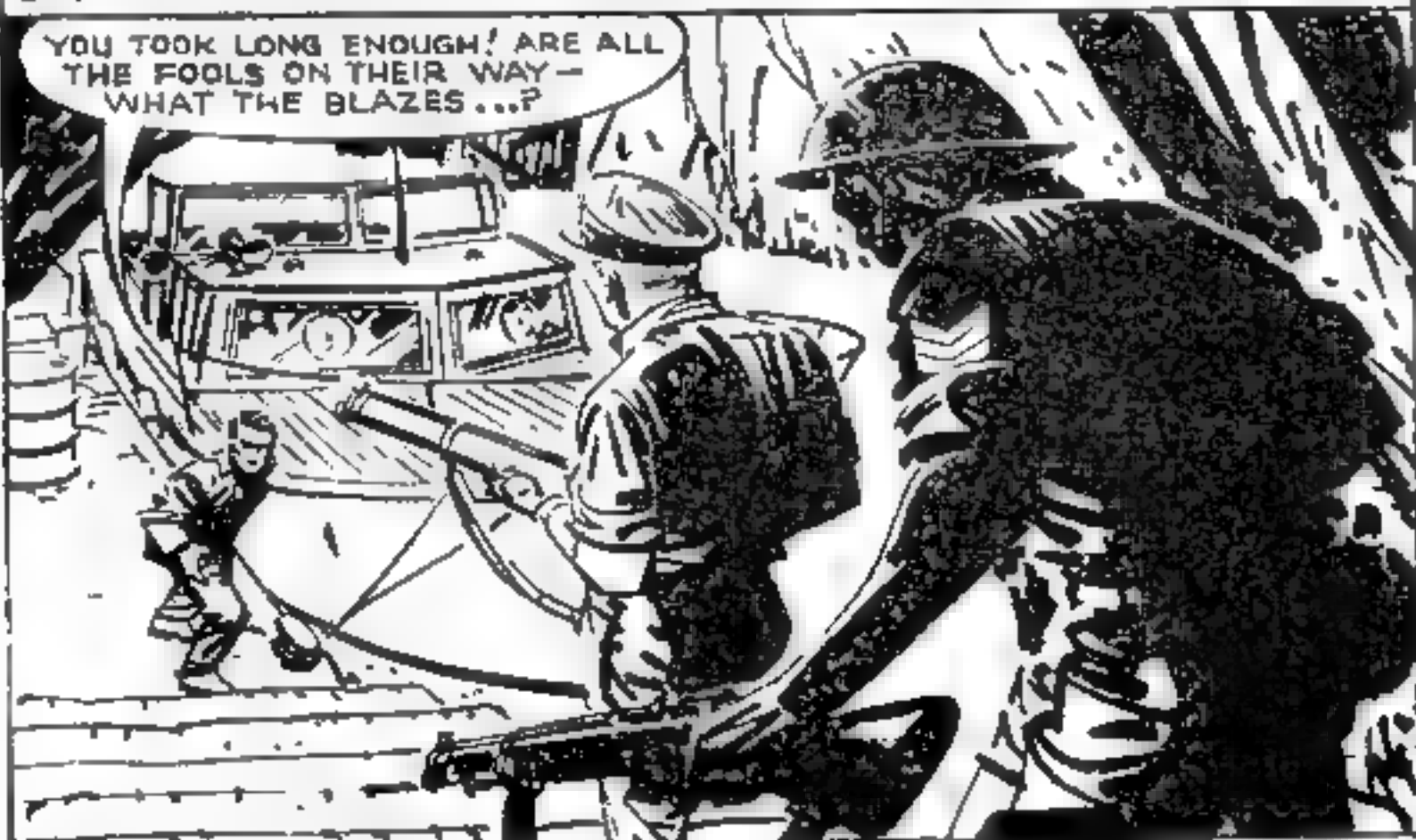
WATCH YOUR STEP, SARGE.





BOB LED THE WAY BACK TO THE DRUG PEDLAR'S HIDEOUT.

YOU TOOK LONG ENOUGH! ARE ALL THE FOOLS ON THEIR WAY—WHAT THE BLAZES...?



ROCKY TAGGART FLUNG HIMSELF AT SLADE, HIS FIST LASHING OUT IN A FULL-BLOODED PUNCH.

ALL OF 'EM BAR THIS ONE, SLADE!

KEEP BACK—AAAGH!



## Rough Justice

SLADE TOPPLED UNCONSCIOUS TO THE GROUND FROM THE WEIGHT OF THAT BLOW.

I THOUGHT YOU'D HAVE FINISHED HIM OFF, ROCKY.

A BULLET'S TOO EASY FOR THIS COVE. WE'LL LEAVE HIM FOR HIS FRIENDS, THE JAPS.



BY THUNDER, THEY'VE GOT SOME HANDY TACKLE HERE. CHECK THE ENGINES, BOB. I'LL LOAD THIS STUFF INTO THE PROW. BY THE TIME WE'RE FINISHED, THIS BOAT WILL BE A FIRST-CLASS TORPEDO.




GINGERLY, THE SERGEANT MANHANDLED THE CANISTERS OF DEADLY EXPLOSIVE ON TO THE BOAT.

I'M NEARLY THROUGH, ROCKY. SHE'S ALL SET TO GO!



THE CAMOUFLAGED NET OF THE SECRET BOATHOUSE WAS LIFTED ASIDE AND THE TWO MEN MANHANDLED THE BOAT OUT INTO CLEAR WATER.

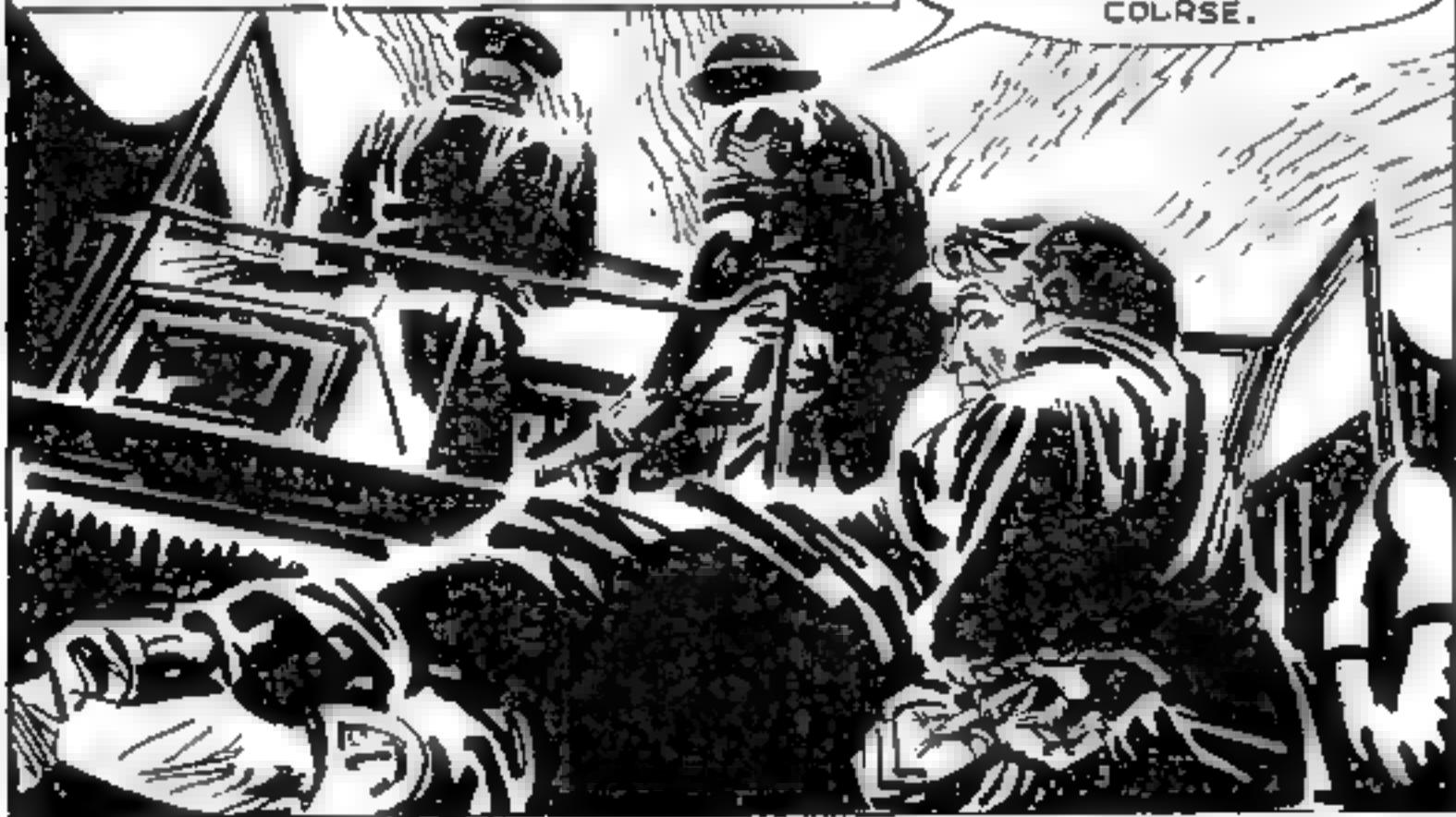
YOU'VE GOT TO HAND IT TO THESE GUYS. YOU COULDN'T SPOT THIS HIDEOUT FROM TEN FEET AWAY.



I'VE RIGGED THE RUDDER. ONCE SHE'S UNDER WAY, SHE'LL HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE JAP SHIP, CAN'T MISS!

BUT SERGEANT TAGGART HAD MADE ONE MISTAKE. HE HAD BADLY UNDERESTIMATED THE RESOURCEFULNESS OF DANNY SLADE.

IT'S NOT AS EASY AS THAT, BOB. THE CURRENT MIGHT PULL HER OFF COURSE.



NO, I'LL STAY ABOARD AND MAKE CERTAIN SHE HITS THE TARGET!

ARE YOU CRAZY? THAT'S SUICIDE! YOU CAN'T DO IT, ROCKY!



BOB LOOKED INTO STEEL GREY EYES THAT NEVER FLINCHED. THERE WERE NO WORDS TO ANSWER THE SERGEANT'S COLD LOGIC.

MY LIFE AGAINST THIRTY LADS OF THE COMPANY, AND A JAP WARSHIP THROWN IN FOR GOOD MEASURE? SEEMS A PRETTY FAR SWOP TO ME, BOB.





A SOFT NOISE BEHIND THEM MADE BOTH MEN SPIN ROUND. THEY GAZED INTO THE COLD, UNWINKING MUZZLE OF A RIFLE.

JUST BACK OFF QUIETLY! I'D LIKE TO HAVE RETURNED THE COMPLIMENT, SERGEANT, BUT I'LL LEAVE THAT FOR THE JAPS. NOW MOVE, CURSE YOU!



SLADE COULD NOT RESIST A FINAL TAUNT AS HE STARTED UP THE MOTORS.

THANKS FOR SETTING IT UP FOR ME, R D ER. YOU SEEM TO MAKE IT A HABIT. BUT I'M AFRAID THIS WILL BE THE LAST TIME.

SO LONG, YOU MUGS, GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE JAPS.



STICKING TO HIS EVIL PLAN, SLADE FIRED A VERY CARTRIDGE TOWARDS THE JUNK LADEN WITH THE BRITISH TROOPS.

THAT SHOULD FIX IT!  
NOW, GOODBYE, YOU  
HEROES - D.E. BRAVELY!



THEN COLD FEAR CLUTCHED AT THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH, FOR THE LAUNCH'S WHEEL SPUN USELESSLY IN HIS HAND.

COME ROUND, CURSE YOU!  
SHE WON'T ANSWER TO  
THE HELM!



BOB HAD DONE HIS WORK WELL. WITH THROTTLES JAMMED FULL OPEN, THE POWERFUL DIESEL ENGINES THRUST THE BOAT FORWARD WITH TREMENDOUS ACCELERATION.

ON BOARD THE JAPANESE SHIP,  
A SHRILL CRY OF ALARM FROM  
A LOOKOUT SENT MEN RACING  
TO ACTION STATIONS.

WHITE DOGS  
IN JUNK -  
OPEN FIRE!

NO! WAIT! TRAVERSE  
LEFT - DESTROY  
THAT LAUNCH!



BOB RIDER WATCHED IN FASCINATED HORROR, AS JUSTICE AT LONG  
LAST WAS DONE.

FOR PETE'S SAKE,  
BOB, COME  
ON!

HOLD ON, ROCKY. I'VE WAITED  
A LONG TIME TO SEE THIS.  
GUESS DANNY WAS RIGHT.  
WE WON'T MEET AGAIN!



SLADE'S LAST YELL OF TERROR WAS DROWNED BY THE ROAR OF THE ENEMY'S SIX-POUNDER.

AAAGH!



THEN THE LAUNCH STRUCK, ITS EXPLOSIVE WARHEAD OF NITRO-GLYCERINE TEARING A GAPING HOLE IN THE SIDE OF THE JAPANESE SHIP.





NEXT MOMENT, THE MAGAZINE ERUPTED, AND THE WHOLE SHIP WAS TORN ASUNDER BY THE STUPENDOUS EXPLOSION DEEP WITHIN ITS HULL.



THE SHORE WAS BATHED IN GHASTLY BLOOD-RED GLOW FROM THE BURNING WARSHIP AS BOB AND SERGEANT TAGGART RACED TO JOIN THEIR COMRADES ON THE JUNK.

YOU KNEW SLADE BEFORE, DIDN'T YOU, BOB?

TOO-TOO LONG A TALE TO TELL YOU NOW, ROCKY. SOMEHOW IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MATTER ANY MORE.



WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE JAP SHIP, THE WAY TO HONG KONG LAY OPEN.

CAST OFF ASTERN. HOIST THE MAIN SHEET.

BY GOLLY, SARGE! THOSE NIPS WON'T FORGET US IN A HURRY.



IN THE UNCANNY STILLNESS THAT FOLLOWED, THE JUNK WALLOWED OVER THE HEAVY SWELL TOWARDS HONG KONG. MEN LAY SUNK IN THE OBLIVION OF SLEEP. FOR A LONG WHILE, BOB RIDER SAT MOTIONLESS AT THE TILLER. THEN ROCKY TAGGART BROKE THE SILENCE.

WHAT'S EATING YOU, SAILOR?

GUESS YOU AND YOUR MATES HAVE TAUGHT ME QUITE A LOT THIS LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, ROCKY. SOMEHOW, THE OLD WORLD'S NOT QUITE SO LOPSIDED AS I'D FIGURED.



IN THE DARKNESS, TAGGART'S FACE THAWED INTO A BLEAK, HUMOURLESS SMILE.

I'M NO MORE A HERO THAN THE NEXT BLOKE, BOB, BUT I DO KNOW THIS. YOU JUST CAN'T LIVE FOR YOURSELF ALONE. PERKAPS IT'S ONLY WHEN THE GOING GETS REALLY ROUGH THAT YOU FIND THAT OUT!



IT WAS JUST ON SUN-UP, WHEN THE SQUAD OF GAUNT FACED MEN LANDED ON A JETTY AT HONG KONG.

CAPTAIN ELTON WAS KILLED IN ACTION, SIR, AND THIS IS ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE COMPANY.

I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU YOU'VE REACHED SAFETY, SERGEANT, BUT YOU'VE ONLY EARNED A BREATHER. GET YOUR MEN AS MUCH REST AS POSSIBLE, WE EXPECT THE JAPS TO ATTACK FROM THE MAINLAND ANY TIME.



THEY HAD RETURNED TO AN ISLAND WHERE NO ILLUSIONS WERE LEFT. THE LAST HOPE THAT REINFORCEMENTS WOULD ARRIVE IN TIME TO STEM THE YELLOW HORDES HAD PASSED. WITH STOIC CALM THE GARRISON WAITED TO SELL THEIR LIVES DEARLY.

HOW LONG DO YOU RECKON YOU'VE GOT, ROCKY?

HARD TO SAY, BOB. DAYS PERHAPS... A WEEK OR SO AT THE MOST. ONE THING'S FOR SURE, NOTHING CAN STOP THE JAPS NOW!



THERE WAS NO TRACE OF DEFEAT IN THE RUGGED SERGEANT'S VOICE, JUST A QUIET ACCEPTANCE OF THE INEVITABLE. AT THAT MOMENT, THERE WAS AN INTERRUPTION.

EXCUSE ME, DO EITHER OF YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW A CHAP CALLED RIDER? HE WAS BOSUN ON THE MARIE ROSE.

YES, I'M RIDER! BUT WHAT...?

THE NAVAL OFFICER DREW UP A CHAIR AND CRISPLY OUTLINED A TALE THAT DROVE THE COLOUR FROM BOB'S STARTLED FACE.

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU EVER SINCE THE AIR RAID. YOU'LL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT ON YOUR CAPTAIN'S RECOMMENDATION YOUR APPOINTMENT AS SECOND OFFICER HAS BEEN RATIFIED. HE'D ALREADY SENT A SIGNAL TO US SOME WEEKS AGO.

WE HOPE TO GET ONE MORE SHIP OUT OF HERE BEFORE THE JAP BLOCKADE IS COMPLETE. SHE SAILS TONIGHT. IT'LL BE PRETTY CROWDED, BUT I'VE MANAGED TO SQUEEZE YOU A PASSAGE TO SINGAPORE. YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN, RIDER.



FOR LONG MOMENTS THERE WAS A TENSE SILENCE. THEN BOB SPOKE IN A SOFT, BUT DECISIVE VOICE, AND A DRY SMILE TOUCHED SERGEANT TAGGART'S FACE.

THANKS FOR YOUR TROUBLE, BUT I STARTED A JOB HERE AND I AIM TO FINISH IT. THAT IS, IF SERGEANT TAGGART CAN STILL USE ME IN HIS COMPANY.

HAPPEN I COULD AT THAT, BOB.



THOSE LAST, FATEFUL DAYS OF THAT DARK DECEMBER WERE IMMORTALISED IN BLOOD AS THE GARRISON FOUGHT TO THE LAST ROUND AND THE LAST GRENADE. TIME AND AGAIN THE YELLOW PERIL WAS HURLED BACK...

BANZAI!  
BANZAI!



THE END WAS INEVITABLE — DEATH OR BRUTAL CAPTIVITY. BUT EACH MAN IN THAT FIGHTING DEFENCE FACED THE PROSPECT WITHOUT FLINCHING.



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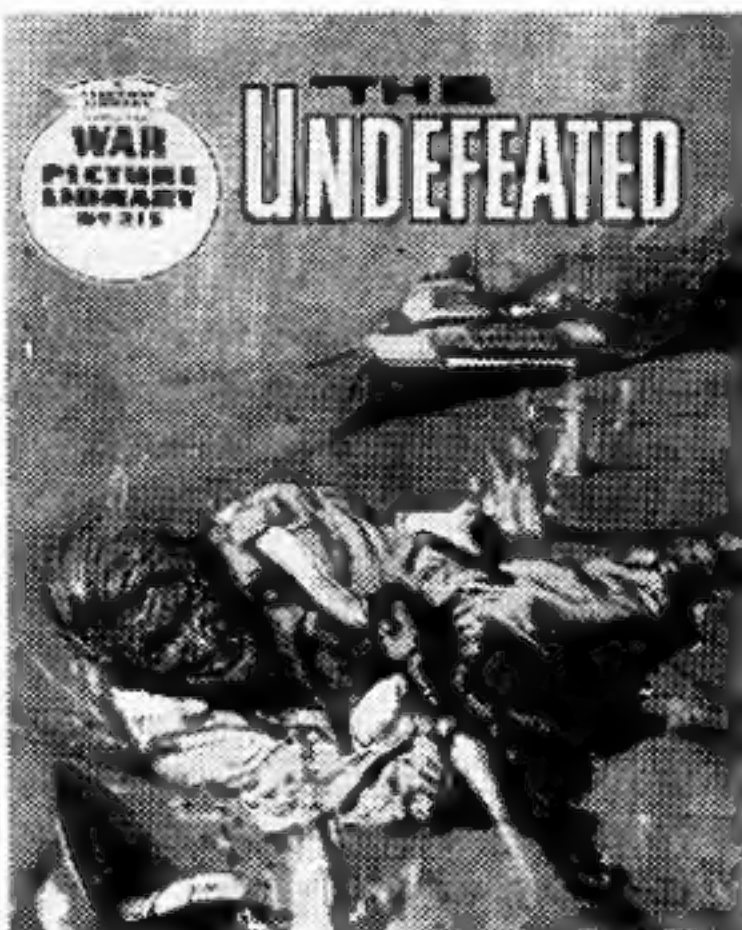
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